

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

TRUSTEN POLK,

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI,

DELIVERED IN JOINT SESSION,

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J. H. BRITTON. *Clerk.*

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

*Fellow-Citizens, and Gentlemen of the Senate
and House of Representatives:—*

In assuming the office of Chief Magistrate of our State, I should do violence to the feelings of my nature, did I forbear to express the gratitude I feel to my fellow-citizens for their confidence and favor, evinced in calling me, by their suffrages, to fill a position so elevated. But, at the same time, I cannot forget, that the responsibilities of the station are fully commensurate with its dignity. And conscious of my own weakness, I feel a painful apprehension, that I may not be able to meet the reasonable expectations of my fellow-citizens, nor the just demands of the office which I have been called to fill. I may derive some support, however, from the reflection, that I can, at least, bring an honest purpose and faithful endeavors to the discharge of the arduous duties that lie before me; and, after that, throw myself upon the indulgent forbearance of my fellow-citizens, who, I am persuaded, will be ever ready to pardon much to the errors of judgment, when assured that my motives are pure and patriotic.

Elected as the advocate and exponent of well known political principles, which I believe wise and Constitutional in themselves, and expedient in their operation; yet, at the same time, I feel it to be due to myself, to say, that in the discharge of my official duties, it shall be my endeavor to act, not as the representative of a party, but as the Chief Executive Officer of the entire people of the State—regardful of the interests and welfare of each individual citizen. And I shall make it my aim, in the execution of the functions of my office, to respect the rights of minorities as well as the wishes of majorities.

In all my official conduct, my leading purpose shall be, faithfully to observe the Constitution of the United States and of the State of Missouri. The emphatic and solemn injunction of the latter, that I “shall take care that the laws shall be faithfully executed,” I hope never to forget; nor ever to lessen the respect due to the laws, by carelessly or

lightly dispensing with the penalties they denounce against their violation. And, I am sure, I shall not cease to be impressed with the truth, that a rigid adherence to the former, in a strict construction of all its provisions, both in its commands and its prohibitions, is the only course that can be relied on for the preservation and perpetuation of the glorious Union of our Confederate States.

It is matter of sincere congratulation, that a love of our cherished Union still pervades the bosoms of the people of the entire Republic. We have just passed through an unusually heated political contest, in which many aggravating and bitter elements of strife have been mingled, most menacing to the integrity of our Confederacy; yet the patriotism of the great conservative masses of our true-hearted citizens,—their attachment to our Constitution,—their love for that Union, by which as a nation we have attained to unexampled greatness and happiness, have triumphed over the fell spirit of sectionalism and disunion.

It will be a never failing source of gratification to me, if I shall be able to contribute in any degree, towards inspiring a more sacred reverence for the Constitution of Government, under which the several peoples of all the States are united as one people,—a stronger attachment to that Union thus established and the free institutions of which it is at once the conservator and guaranty—and a fraternal regard for each of our sister States and for the people of every section of our widely extended country. Oh! that these sentiments might pervade the population of our common country from North to South, and from Sea to Sea.

In obedience to the requirements of our own State Constitution, and conformably to the provisions of our Federal Compact, which confines the action of the General Government within the limitations of powers expressly granted by it, and reserves to the States respectively, or to the people thereof, all the powers not granted, you, gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives, have assembled to devise such measures and enact such laws, as in your judgment, the institutions, condition and interests of the people of our beloved State may require.

No one can reflect upon the commanding position which our State is permitted to occupy, without just pride and high hopes. Possessed of a soil of unrivaled fertility and great variety, as also a genial climate, alike favorable to the diversity and copiousness of our agricultural productions, and to the healthfulness and vigor of our people, mental and corporeal; possessing inexhaustible mines of the most valuable metals, those metals to which the civilization of the world is most deeply indebted, we have already made a growth in all that constitutes a great and prosperous commonwealth, which may well inspire sentiments of gratitude and pride. And if we shall wisely and efficiently avail ourselves of these inestimable

advantages, we may anticipate, with the favor of a kind Providence, a future which almost challenges imagination to portray.

Facts and considerations like these, beget very weighty and solemn responsibilities.

In performing the respective parts in the legislation of our State, assigned by the Constitution to you, gentlemen of the General Assembly, and to myself, I hope the Legislature and the Executive will never be brought into conflict. It certainly will be my object to coöperate, and not to contend, with you.

The Constitution, in my opinion, reposes the power of a qualified veto in the Executive over the action of the General Assembly, not so much to vest legislative power in the Governor, as to arrest the rash or intemperate exercise of that power, by the Senate and House of Representatives. But should such a state of things unfortunately arise, I will endeavor to meet, what I shall deem my constitutional obligations in that emergency, with becoming firmness.

I consider that it is the spirit of our Constitution, as well as the dictate of justice and right, that the legislation of the State should bear equally on all its great interests; and, as far as it may be practicable, on each of its individual citizens—conferring on all equal rights, and imposing on all equal burthens. I hold it to be a Republican maxim, that the government of the State should bear as lightly as possible upon its population. And to effect this, like the atmosphere, it should press on all alike, and in all points of its contact, equally on each individual.

It will be my aim to do all I can within the scope of my constitutional authority to foster our great agricultural, manufacturing and commercial interests, and to aid in directing the energies and enterprise of our citizens in the development of the resources of our State, mineral and agricultural. When the agriculturist has gathered his crop,—when the miner has disemboweled the ores from our mines, and the manufacturer has converted them into metal, a market is needed. It will be my pleasure to aid in furnishing facilities to render this desideratum attainable.

Previous Legislatures have inaugurated in our State a system of Railroads, for the accomplishment of this and kindred objects. In these roads the State is deeply interested, not only as they must affect her prosperity and growth,—the wealth of her citizens—their advancement in the arts of civilization, and their substantial and permanent melioration in all respects, but, also, because of the high pecuniary stake that she has in them.

I think all who have even casually observed the progress of things, must be satisfied, that if this system shall be made to answer the end in-

tended, and these roads be completed, it must be accomplished mainly, if not exclusively, by our own means and energies. Are we equal to the task?

With an intelligent and enterprising population, comprising men from different States and countries, reared and educated amid the discoveries and inventions that science and art have achieved, and thus imbued with every kind of practical skill and experience, ready to seize upon every occasion offered by our great natural advantages, and willing to encounter a present burthen for the sake of a greater future good, I cannot distrust our ability.

But at the same time, it will require time, and economy, and prudence in the management of our means and resources and in making and executing the contracts for the work required. We must be careful not to destroy the energies of our constituency by over-tasking them, nor exhaust their resources by drawing on them too largely all at once. By all means let us see to it that all the liabilities of the State are met promptly, and in full. Let her credit and character be maintained untarnished and above doubt.

I am satisfied that the public sentiment of the State is in favor of the adoption of the amendment to the Constitution on the subject of Banks, submitted to the arbitrament of the people by the last General Assembly.

Surrounded as we are by a multitude of Banks created by our Sister States, and flooded as we must be by their issues, the necessities of our condition are such, that we are not left the alternative of determining whether it is best to have Bank Notes at all or not. To have them seems inevitable — and if not domestic, then foreign.

Accordingly, the question presented by the action of the last Legislature, will not be, whether the Constitution ought to contain a prohibition against all Banks — but, whether it shall retain its present provision, or shall in its place embody the proposed amendment. In other words, whether the existing article in our Constitution is such as is best adapted to our present condition and most likely to insure our future progress?

This provision in our Organic Law fixed limitations on the number and capital of the banks, which, when the State Government was formed, were, doubtless, ample enough for the wants of our State while in her infancy. But now that she is growing up to the strength of maturer years, she needs wider limits and freer scope for the development of her expanding faculties and energies.

Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives, it will devolve on you to say, whether the welfare of the State and your duty to your constituents, require the adoption of the amendment proposed, And as I feel well assured that in your deliberations and in your

most difficult and important subject, you will be prompted by upright motives, so, also, I trust you will be guided by wise counsels.

Fellow-citizens: "I may often go wrong," even while doing the best I can. "When right, I shall often be thought wrong by those whose positions will not command a view of the whole ground." Prone to error and exposed to misconstruction, I feel myself impelled to appeal for guidance and support to that Divine Wisdom and Power, whose interposition and succor I know I shall constantly need.

